

Testimony before the Higher Education Committee
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Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art
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Thank you for inviting me to speak Madam Chairman.

I have been the director of the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford for nearly two years.

I've had a long career in museums in several regions of the country in cities large and medium sized.

Today I'd like to tell you about how museums I've run have contributed to the economy of their cities.

It's obvious how large city museums such as the Smithsonian Institution where I came here from draws tourists that spend money in hotels, restaurants, and other industries that profit from substantial tourism.

Medium sized metropolitan areas such as this region of Connecticut can profit from lively engaged museums and that benefit is shared by the state.

The opportunity here is great but more can be done here to exploit our cultural assets.

Before working in administration for the Smithsonian, I ran a major art museum in Des Moines, Iowa, the other insurance industry center in the country.

In my seven years at the helm of the Des Moines Art Center, I helped begin a cultural renewal of the city – a partnership between government, business, local art collectors (one who has relocated to Connecticut), and the museum in Des Moines.

Those of you who might have gone to Des Moines several years ago may remember it as a quiet place with not much to do.

If you went there today, you'd see a different city. In covering the presidential campaign in Iowa, the New York Times did a front page piece singing the city's praises.

Recently, an article about how the city has changed was headlined "*Cure for Urban Blight: Plant lots of Sculpture*". It discussed our partnership, where major collectors of large scale sculpture gave works to the museum—over 25 works worth over \$40 million—and the museum placed them around the city in two different urban areas including a riverfront park funded by Principal Financial.

Now Des Moines is a destination in the Midwest not a fly over zone.

In addition, the museum partnered with the city to curate a weekend summer arts festival drawing nearly 300,000 people.

Twenty years ago I began a program called Artist and the Community in Winston-Salem, NC. Artists came from all over to partner with community organizations to create public projects addressing local issues.

The most lasting result is a Center for the Study of African American Culture and History at the historical site of Old Salem. Tourists from around the world come to Winston-Salem for this experience and now can also learn about the rich history of free African Americans during colonial times.

I am recreating aspects of that community based program here in Connecticut, where we have such a lively cultural scene.

At the Wadsworth Atheneum I began a Community Engagement Initiative, which received a \$500,000 grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. Now, we are developing new programs to span the next 2 years.

The major focus is on education and students. Museum on the Move is a Wadsworth Atheneum pilot project focused on four urban Hartford schools. It is tied to literacy with the goal of linking the arts with student performance.

It will be a multi-part experience with 16 docents going into 4th grade classrooms and students coming here to visit. Curriculum will be developed and evaluated based on two of Hartford Public School's targeted Grade Level Expectations – oral language and writing.

The UCONN School of Education will be evaluating the program and, based on outcomes, the program will be expanded to other 4th grade classrooms in the suburbs and communities surrounding Hartford.

My aim is to make the museum a center for learning.

In the coming two years the Atheneum will partner with dozens of organizations around the state: from schools and cultural centers to social service organizations and family centers.

These are just some examples of how the cultural community can impact the health and economy of our state: by becoming destinations for those interested in art and culture and by training new generations to appreciate the rich cultural experiences our state has to offer.

Thank you.